

HORNEBECK
2139 Wyoming Avenue
Washington 8, D.C.

June 7, 1950

The Honorable
Dean Rusk
Assistant Secretary of State

Dear Dr. Rusk:

In reply to your letter of May 19 regarding statements recently made by Mr. Earl Browder and a memorandum released to the press by Mr. Browder and published by The Worker on October 18, 1942, and with reference especially to your request that I furnish the Department such details regarding this matter as I can reconstruct from memory:

You will doubtless have been informed by Mr. Sprouse that, after the receipt of your letter under reference, I some days ago spoke with him on the telephone and informed him that, although I clearly recall having known at the time that Mr. Welles talked with Mr. Browder and that Mr. Browder thereafter issued a statement and released therewith the text of a memorandum which he said had been handed him by Mr. Welles, there was little that I could add from memory to what is set forth in your letter and the enclosure thereto. At the same time I offered to come to the Department at any time for the purpose of discussing the matter or seeing what the files disclose, or both.

That Mr. Welles gave Mr. Browder a memorandum there can be no doubt. The account given in that text of the matters to which it relates is, I believe, substantially accurate. How or by whom that text was drafted I am not able to say. There are passages in it which might have been drafted by me or by any one of several officers on duty and concerned with China and relations with China as of October 1942, and there are passages which might have been accepted or approved by me but which would not, I believe, have originated with me. I recall that Mr. Welles communicated with me regarding Mr. Browder's call, but I do not recall at what stage or stages. I believe that he asked in advance for a memorandum for his (Mr. Welles') information and guidance, and, although I do not recall the circumstances of the drafting, I believe such a memorandum was prepared with participation on my part and for those purposes. I recall being informed after the call that Mr. Welles had given Mr. Browder a memorandum, and I recall having felt that the text of the memorandum thus given was not entirely such as I would have drafted or recommended for that purpose.

More important, in my opinion, than the question of the origin of the memorandum under reference is the question whether there took place in 1942 a "change" in American policy regarding China and whether this memorandum or the facts of the situation to which it related marked a "turning point."

What Mr. Browder may have had in mind when he expressed himself in 1950 to the effect, as stated in your letter, that "he did consider it a change of policy", we need not for present purposes attempt to conjecture.

Looking at the text of the memorandum as copied from The Worker of October 18, 1942, I can say: In that memorandum, dealing with and refuting assertions and charges which had been made by Mr. Browder, there was given an objective account of developments in and regarding China and an honest review of what had been and was the official position of the United States with regard to the question of "civil strife" in China. -- A review of the whole history of American policy in relations to China will show that although the United States had consistently deprecated not only aggression by other countries against China but civil strife -- with or without foment or support by other countries -- within China, the United States had long been committed to the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. It will show also that for many years before 1942, and in that year, and for some time thereafter the Government of the United States, in the formulating of official policy regarding China, both kept in mind and respected that commitment and that principle. There was official noting of civil strife in China; there was official giving of advice that civil strife be avoided; there was official collaboration with the Government of China toward strengthening China's effort in the War;

but there was with regard to the civil conflict within China no official taking of a position either "against" or for any party or faction. There were on the part of some American nationals some manifestations in some contexts of a tendency to ignore or misinterpret or disregard official policy, but the thoughts and the acts of such nationals in those respects were their own, not those of their Government, and were, incidentally, in most cases favorable to, certainly not "against", the Communists. -- On the basis of what I then knew and of what I have from subsequent study I learned, I find no warrant for an opinion or a conjecture that there took place in 1942 a change in the official attitude and policy of the United States regarding China.

Both "turning Point" and "change of policy" came later.

A case could be made for a contention that the "turning point" came at the time of the Teheran Conference (November-December, 1943); a better case, that it came toward the end of the next year, 1944; but search for a clearly discernable and descriptably "change of policy" leads into and through the year 1945.

It will be recalled that there took place in 1944 -- and not until then -- the first of a series of reorganizations of the Department of State; that during that year there were substantial shiftings of personnel within and outward from the Department, including, in December, the retirement of Secretary of State Cordell Hull; and that there took place in 1945 the Yalta Conference, the death of President Roosevelt, the San Francisco Conference, the capitulation of Germany, the Capitulation of Japan, the Potsdam Conference, the Conclusion (with American encouragement) of an Agreement between the Soviet Union and China, the first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and, in December, announcement by President Truman of a "United States Policy toward China" which was then and thereafter declared to be a "new" policy.

It was then, in the year 1945 -- and not before then -- that the Government of the United States, first having taken action inconsistent with tradition and commitment in regard to China, embarked upon what became a course of intervention in regard to the civil conflict, the conflict between the National Government and the Communists, in China. It was then that words and action of the Government of the United States began to be expressive of an "against" and a "for" attitude; then and thereafter that the government of the United States brought to bear pressures, pressures upon the National Government, pressures which were not "against" the Communists but were on their behalf, pressures not to the disadvantage of the Communists, but, in effect, to the disadvantage of the National Government.

To the circumstances of the "change", to the content and purport of the policy devised in 1945, proclaimed on December 15 of that year, and given expression in word and in deed since then, and to the gross and the net consequences thereof, there is no need for attention in the present context. There is, however, in my opinion, great need that, in the context of present American involvement, as a leading participant, in a third global conflict, wherein "Communist" totalitarianism is making war, both "cold" and "hot", on all States, Governments, peoples, institutions, organizations and persons disinclined to accept domination by it, -- there is urgent need that the Government of the United States give solicitous attention to the question: Must the United States follow to the bitter, tragic and discrediting end the downward path, in relations with China, on which its feet were set in the fateful year of military victories and diplomatic vagaries and vitiations, 1945?

I should welcome an opportunity to talk with you on the implications of query.

Yours cordially and sincerely,

/s/ Stanley K. Hornbeck
STANLEY K. HORNBECK

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